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## THE PARIDÆ OF GERMANY.

BY REV. W. F. HENNINGER.

The Palearctic Region has many forms of this family when compared with the Nearctic. Setting aside subspecific niceties—and as long as subspecies do not differ appreciably from the species proper biologically I do not see the reason for laying so much stress upon the distinctions in life history sketches of birds—there are just nine species of titmice proper found in the old Fatherland. Of these, however, *Cyanistes cyaneus* is only a casual visitor from the east, *Panurus biarmicus* from the southeast, and *Remiza pendulina* only at rare times a summer resident. This leaves six species for discussion.

One must either recognize the one genus *Parus* or must consider each species to belong to a different genus, and in the light of the points of difference brought out by a thorough scientific investigation it is hard to understand how anything other than the creation of separate genera for each species could be thought of. *Parus major*, the Big Cole or Great Tit; *Pariparus ater*, the Brown Cole Tit; *Cyanistes cœruleus*, the Blue Tit; *Penthestes palustris*, the Swamp Tit; *Lophophanes cristatus*, the Crested Tit, and finally *Aegithalus caudatus*, the Long-tailed Tit. They all differ considerably in coloration, and while I do not wish to inflict a long-winded description of the various species upon the readers of the Bulletin, still the following diagnosis will be necessary.

*Parus major*.—Back yellowish-green, upper tail coverts bluish-gray, under parts yellow, top of head, throat and a streak down the anus black, cheeks white. Length 14 centimeters, tail 6 cm.

*Parus ater*.—Upper parts bluish-ash, lower parts whitish, head and neck black, a big cheek patch and a longitudinal stripe on the nape white. Length 11 cm., tail 5 cm.

*Cyanistes coruleus*.—Wings, tail, top of head sky blue; a wing band, edge of cheeks and nape white; cheeks lined with blue; streak through the eye and a small spot in the nape bluish-black; rest of upper parts green, under parts yellow. Length 12 cm., tail 5.5 cm.

*Penthestes palustris*.—Whole top of head black with a metallic bluish tinge; spot on chin black; upper parts brownish-gray overlaid with rufous; sides of throat, breast, flanks, and lower parts rusty whitish; wings and tail darker and grayer. Length 11.5 cm., tail 4.8 cm.

*Lophophanes cristatus*.—Upper parts reddish over a brownish-gray; lower parts whitish; feathers of head black with whitish tips; a conspicuous crest; a streak through the eye, throat, two stripes to the occiput black; cheeks white; wings and tail dark grayish-brown. Length 12 cm., tail 4.5 cm.

*Aegithalus caudatus*.—Head and lower parts white; sides of breast, under tail coverts, lower back overlaid with light reddish-brown; tail wedge-shaped, the four middle rectrices black, the rest black with whitish tips and outer edges; front part of back and wings blackish. Total length 15 cm., of which the tail measures 9 cm.

The Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalus caudatus*) is commonly called 'The Panhandle,' and a more appropriate sobriquet could not be found. Imagine a birdikin whose body is a trifle smaller than that of our Winter Wren, reminding you of a thimble-like fluffy ball of cotton, with a tail that resembles the handle of a frying-pan, and you will understand the name 'Panhandle.' The first time I met this most charming acrobat of the Titmouse family was on February 1, 1889. A sudden dash of warm winds had made the snow entirely disappear.

Picking my way along the edge of a small park, struggling through the mire against a severe gust of wind, I was not paying the usual close attention to the surroundings when a sharp whirr made me look up, and just at that moment I saw a troop of from ten to fifteen 'Panhandles' alighting in some birch trees. It seemed as if a small flight of miniature white arrows was showered from twig to twig, from branch to branch. Hanging on the lower side of the boughs, encircling others with their tiny claws, performing all sorts of gymnastic exercises about them, whirring to another tree, examining all crevices for insects, sounding their sharp notes 'derr derr,' these titmice were certainly to all appearances a large edition of animated snowflakes. Never did I see a flock of birds make a more careful and systematic search for insects and their eggs than this swarm of pygmies; and they did it so rapidly that it almost made your head ache by trying to keep your eyes riveted on this bunch of busybodies. They disappeared just as swiftly as they had come. Though a tender bird in outward appearance this little dwarf is perfectly hardy and many, many of its families brave the storms of northern Germany, yea the farther south you go the rarer it is until in Spain and Greece it is seldom found.

The birds are not as quarrelsome as other members of the family Paridæ, but are jolly and more active, roving about in troops not only in winter and fall, for my earliest dates of troops of 25 or 30 are June 28, 1892, near the Rhine. The birds seem to prefer the non-coniferous forests; where the deciduous trees are missing they are not often found, and even then they will prefer parks and orchards to the depths of the woods. In their rambles they are frequently associated with other titmice, kinglets and creepers. Their song is a sweet melodious twitter that does not carry very far, according to my observations. As a nest-builder, however, the Long-tailed Tit develops a mastership that calls forth our highest admiration. In contrast to the other members of the family except *Panurus biarmicus* and *Remiza pendulina*, it builds a nest, not being satisfied with a cavity only, although some observers state

that the nest proper is sometimes placed in a cavity. The nests I have found were all placed in birch trees, but of course numerous other kinds of trees and even elder and juniper bushes are used. One side of the nest leans against the body of the tree, the bottom resting upon a bough and fastened to it.

It is a delight to watch the birds building their domicile. They begin by placing a number of mosses and lichens on the bough, perhaps to the extent of four or five centimeters, carrying the material with their tiny bills, and making trips at regular intervals, never going very far away from the home-place. They securely fasten the material with larger pieces, then build upon this, clinging the while to the outside walls with their tiny feet, thus working away until they have felted an oval-shaped ball fifteen or twenty centimeters in height and probably eleven or twelve centimeters in circumference. They line the inside with feathers, wool, and horse-hair, leaving a round entrance hole a trifle above the center of the ball. The outside of this wonderful piece of workmanship, which it takes about three weeks to complete, is so closely covered with lichens, spider-webs and the like, that it cannot be distinguished with certainty from many a knot with which the branches are covered. One must therefore resort to the practice of watching the female as she goes to and from the nest. Some writers assert that the entrance to the nest is always on the east side but I must confess that this is a point that has escaped me.

The Long-tailed Tit is very prolific, as many as 17 eggs having been found in a nest, while I have always found ten. Eggs in my collection from Holland show about the average measurement of 14 by 10 millimeters.

Nest building comes in April. I found ten young ready to fly on May 18, 1890 (see Wm. Baer, *Ornis der preussischen Oberlausitz*, page 31). Incubation lasts about 13 days. The young are fed with great regularity about every five minutes with a great variety of insects, insect eggs, and larvæ. When older they stick their long tails through the walls of the nest.

producing a very ludicrous appearance to the whole affair, but eliminating the necessity of cleaning the nest. The birds are said to raise a second brood in some localities, the second brood appearing in June.

The coloration of the young differs considerably from that of the old birds. The head and neck are black or sooty, the throat and lower parts are white with a grayish tinge. It is needless to say that the Long-tailed Tit is a wholly beneficial bird, well deserving the universal protection and welcome wherever it is met with.

The Crested Tit (*Lophophanes cristatus*) forms the greatest contrast to the Long-tailed Tit, at least as far as habitat is concerned, for it is a lover of the gloomy depths of the coniferous forests—pines as well as firs. All the different titmice troop together in the fall with kinglets, creepers, and nut-hatches, and generally have as their leader a fine specimen of the Great Spotted Woodpecker. Common need brings them together, and the all absorbing food question seems to be the controlling feature of their roving lives. But when the zephyrs of spring call, the troops disband and the individuals betake themselves to the serious business of house-keeping. Even into the almost solemn gloom of the pine forest a ray and breath of the warm sunshine seems to float and bring with it the jolly Crested Tit.

The passion of love causes the male to erect his crest, assume the most peculiar coquettish appearance, almost dancing around his ladylove, who, like all of her sex, wants to be coaxed before she declares herself conquered. During this time one can hear the low twitter of their mating song which is totally different from their call notes, but yet insignificant as far as beauty and melody are concerned. Coupled with these actions is an increased activity in searching for food, and the time of year assures a bountiful harvest of insects. Among the branches, under the bark, on the ground, among the root-lets of the trees they search with wonderful agility and energy. Wherever the food is abundant they tarry longer, one taking the place of another, chasing this neighbor, pinching that one

in the leg, fighting with a third, but never losing an opportunity for an inviting morsel. Finally they are mated and have selected a knot-hole or a hole made by the carpenters of the forest—the woodpeckers—or, as the convenient nesting sites are growing fewer every year, take to some artificial bird box hung by a friendly hand of the 'Deutscher Verein zum Schutze der Vogelwelt,' or even into the walls of a deserted squirrel or magpie nest.

Two broods of from eight to ten are reared every year. The eggs of all the titmice species resemble one another in coloration, the ground color being a white with reddish-brown and rusty spots. However, they differ in measurements and in the arrangement of the spots so that it is comparatively easy to refer an egg to the species. The eggs of this species measure 16 by 12 millimeters.

While the young are being fed the Crested Tit often visits deciduous trees to gather the fat young caterpillars and does not confine its efforts to the firs and pines only. The young, when you come near to their habitation, will eye you with the same curiosity as the old ones, will raise their crests just as quickly and scold you just as emphatically. When the rigorous frosts of early fall come they grow restless and soon seek the companionship of other titmice until we find the large groups of birds which roam through the woods all winter. Such groups are only occasionally disturbed by the swift and furious attacks of the Sparrow Hawk (*Accipiter nisus*). With spring the round of life in families again begins.

The Brown Cole Tit (*Periparus ater*) is another of the lovers of the coniferous forests, though clinging more to the pines than to the firs. Impudence, jollity, and an inclination to quarrel are common traits of all tits, and this species is no exception to the rule. While the notes of all titmice are similar a trained ear will know the various species at once. The notes of this species might be rendered as a low 'sis sis sis sisi.'

This is another of the wholly beneficial species. It clears the pines of insect pests, but also eats some seeds.

Old hollow stumps, if handy, are their most common nesting sites, but the scarcity of these has driven this species underground. On July 17, 1889, we found a nest in an old deserted badger hole, the nest an arm's length under the ground. It was neatly made of horse hair, cattle and badger hair, grass, moss, and a few feathers. At another time I saw a bird flying into a mouse hole near a roadside, but this nest, too, had no eggs. Sometimes even heaps of stones are utilized. Nesting occurs in May, but on May 20 we have found a nest containing eleven young about ready to fly. From six to eleven eggs constitute a set. The eggs measure 15.5 by 11.5 millimeters.

The Brown Cole Tit is one of the last to join the titmouse assembly in fall, and one of the first to leave it in the middle of March; in fact this species has fewer distinguishing features than any of the rest.

The Blue Tit (*Cyanistes coeruleus*) is the most beautiful colored one of them all. The peculiar blending of colors, the tameness, and confidence it places in man, the sagacity and cunning, and the omnipresence of this species make it well known to all. While it seems to prefer the deciduous trees to the coniferous woods, I have found it equally abundant in both except during the breeding season. Its strong inclination to quarrel is a characteristic which we must deplore. Not only will the birds fight among themselves to a bitter finish, but they will even kill other birds weaker than themselves; indeed, they do not seem afraid to battle with species of greater strength and size. But what of it! Nesting sites are few and the trouble of finding them great and time consuming, and why should the intruder live? A few strokes of the beak crush the skull of the intruding rival, the would-be robber of the long-sought home, and the trouble is ended. Who will blame the Blue Tit if it defends to the death its house and home? Moreover, why should we persecute the Blue Tit on that account? Nature always maintains a right balance and will adjust itself if man will only not meddle, for 'only man is vile.' There is too much rubbish written about useful and detrimental species, all wholly from the standpoint of the sel-



fish utilitarian standpoint of man. The question is not merely whether the species is found to be beneficial or harmful after the examination of the contents of many stomachs by experts of the Department of Agriculture, and hence should be protected or not protected, but rather, as a German naturalist has recently said, 'Nature must be full of interesting figures, of various voices, that man may find pleasure in it, for only out of nature can a nation regain vitality, energy, and power. Nations who have lost their feeling for nature, like the Italians and Spaniards, by killing off the feathered songsters and making a solitude of their forests and fields, have the germs of death in their national lives; in fact, are only living artificial lives. Nations who retain a strong feeling for nature as the Teutonic, Slavic, and Japanese, can be beaten to the ground and like Anteus of old can rise with renewed vigor. Consequently every government should be wise enough to keep this feeling alive within the nation, and one of the means is the preservation of existing forms whether beneficial or not.' Then why try to persecute the Blue Tit? No, let it live to be enjoyed by both young and old.

The same nesting places are sought by the Blue Tit as by the other members of this family, the same jealous quarrels and love affairs are pursued, the same roving habits taken up in the fall and winter.

The eggs number from six to ten, and measure 15 by 12 millimeters. By the end of May the young are ready to fly. Incubation is performed by the female alone, but the young are provided for by both parents. I found their nests in the knot-holes of the oak more often than in any other tree.

The Great Tit (*Parus major*) is in many respects a larger edition of the Blue Tit, but still has many peculiarities of its own. It also prefers the deciduous trees to the coniferous woods, but during the breeding season is not quite as much restricted to them as the Blue Tit, and is found in mountains and foot hills as often as in the valleys and on the plains.

The characteristic call note is a loud 'pink, pink,' the mating note a 'bissi' or a 'disda disda,' but there are many other



notes. Early in March we hear these notes when intense rivalry exists among the males for the affections of some coveted female.

There is no rest in the life of the Great Tit, nor is it ever disgruntled except on rare occasions. In this, as well as in its inquisitiveness, it is an exact counterpart of our House Wren or Bewick's Wren. Its actions are a revelation of mouselike rapidity, dodging, turning from side to side on a twig, creeping through holes, prying into the stable or quarreling with a colleague. At times the bird is so grotesque and comical that you cannot suppress a fit of laughter, especially since it seems to take everything in dead earnest. It looks at you as much as to say: 'Did you ever see a more astute being?'

Alas, the Great Tit has the same murderous quality of character as the Blue Tit.

The Great Tit likes to use the same domicile as that of the previous season. Into this cavity the female drags moss, feathers, wool, and other materials; she is accompanied by the male who, however, does not help in carrying the material, in which respect he is like the Indian whose idea is 'Big Chief no work, squaw work.' After the foundation has been laid the industrious worker spies out the cattle and horse hairs that are left hanging on the bushes and thorn hedges with which to line the nest. In placing and arranging the lining she uses both bill and feet. The eggs are from seven to thirteen in number and measure 17.5 by 13.5 millimeters.

While the female is performing the office of incubation the male supplies her with caterpillars, and after the young have hatched he joins the female and redoubles his efforts to supply the loudly clamoring young. A second brood is generally reared, for by the end of May the young of the first brood are ready to fly.

Besides the cavities supplied by nature I have found these birds breeding in holes in telegraph and telephone poles. They also have regular sleeping holes which are not, however, used for breeding purposes.

The Swamp or Marsh Tit (*Penthestes palustris*) has always

been my favorite among the German titmice. It reminds one of our American Chickadee in coloration as well as in habits. Both belong to the same subgenus. This is the jolliest and quickest of the German tits. From early morning to the fall of night it is constantly on the go, and the woods ring with the call note—'sia.' Its love plays are similar to those of the Tree Pipit (*Anthus trivialis*) described in the Wilson Bulletin for March, 1903.

It loves to select a sleeping hole to spend the night in. During the summer of 1890 one always slept in a knothole in our rustic bowling alley, and neither the rumble of the balls, the cracking of the pins, nor the talking and laughing of the crowd, nor even the fact that I often caught her in my hands, caused her to leave her favorite abode. She became perfectly fearless of our presence.

The food of this tit consists of insects, and of seeds, principally the seeds of the sunflower in the fall.

The hollow tops and holes in old willows are preferred to any other places in which to deposit the eggs. Such holes are generally filled out with moss, dry grass, and hair, but I have found them placed on the chips or sawdust without any nesting material whatever. From five to ten eggs are laid, which measure 15 by 12 millimeters. Wm. Baer, in his 'Ornis der preussischen Oberlausitz,' page 32, mentions my finding three eggs of the subspecies *meridionalis subpalustris*, which is correct, as I caught the bird on the eggs on May 3, 1891; but he does not mention my set of five eggs taken on April 22, 1890, which at the time he referred to the same subspecies. The former was given to a friend, but the latter is still in my possession. The subspecific distinctions in the case of the Marsh Tit are of more value than most subspecies, for if all observations prove true their life histories, call notes, etc., are different.

Taken all together the family Paridæ contains most charming and interesting birds which are well worth being introduced into this country where they would likely form a most desirable and profitable acquisition.

All members of this family can be easily kept in confinement, the Long-tailed Tit being the most troublesome in this respect.

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## BALD EAGLES' NEST AT LEWISTOWN RESERVOIR.

BY G. C. FISHER.

Early in March of last year there appeared in the local newspapers of Western Ohio statements regarding an eagles' nest which had been constructed at the Lewistown Reservoir. Following is a verbatim excerpt from one of these articles:

"A sight which has not been witnessed in Ohio for years is now being viewed by duck hunters on the Lewistown Reservoir. On Crane Island of that fishing resort two large-sized bald eagles have during the winter erected their nest in the top of two tall oaks. The birds are beautiful specimens and many hunters have endeavored to bring one or both to earth. The nest appears from the ground to be fully twenty feet square and from ten to fifteen feet in depth."

Our attention was thus turned to this point of interest, and regardless of the evident exaggeration and inaccuracy, we were anxious to see the object of this press comment.

The Lewistown Reservoir is located in Logan County, Ohio, and is near the T. and O. C. Railroad, about eighteen miles east of Wapakoneta. It belongs to the State of Ohio, and was originally constructed as a feeder for the Miami and Erie Canal. It covers 7,200 acres, or nearly twelve square miles, and is now a famous resort for duck hunters, fishermen, and camping parties. In the Fish and Game Laws, it is known as "Indian Lake," although Indian Lake is, in reality, only a small part of the Lewistown Reservoir.

Arriving at the Reservoir on the afternoon of March 26, 1906, we were greatly disappointed to find that the ice had not yet gone off "The Pond." It was too rotten to walk upon with safety, and yet not a hole in sight, even with a good field